



**MEDIA STATEMENT**  
**25 January 2019**

**Australia Day Message - Anton Block, President**

The Australian Jewish community joins with our fellow Australians to mark our national day with both celebration and reflection. Australia Day is an opportunity to give thanks for the blessings we enjoy as Australians, to contemplate the things that make our country special, to celebrate our freedom and prosperity, and to commit ourselves to ensuring that Australia is a fair and just society for all its citizens.

The Australian Jewish community is unique among Jewish communities worldwide in that it can trace the precise date that our presence in this country commenced. That date is 26 January, 1788 when the First Fleet sailed into Port Jackson and European settlement of the land commenced. At least 14 Jewish convicts were aboard the Fleet.

Since that day, Jewish-Australians have contributed in shaping our great country by helping to build it as convict-labourers, by pursuing liberty and justice throughout the world as soldiers and field-nurses; and by helping to establish and entrench our democratic values and institutions as jurists and members of state and federal parliaments.

The greatness of our country surely comes from the unique combination of values on which it is built - values such as democracy, tolerance, mutual respect, egalitarianism and mateship, which together capture the essence of the relationship between Australians. It is our belief, that all Australians have a duty to defend and safeguard these values.

On Australia Day, we also pause to contemplate the enduring plight of our First Peoples who continue to suffer discrimination, and adverse outcomes in health, incarceration rates and in virtually every measure of quality of life, when compared with non-Indigenous Australians. Compelled by the Jewish people's ancient belief in justice and human dignity, we feel a special bond with our First Peoples and urge all Australians to help them achieve justice and genuine reconciliation.

We wish all of our fellow Australians a joyous and meaningful Australia Day.

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